



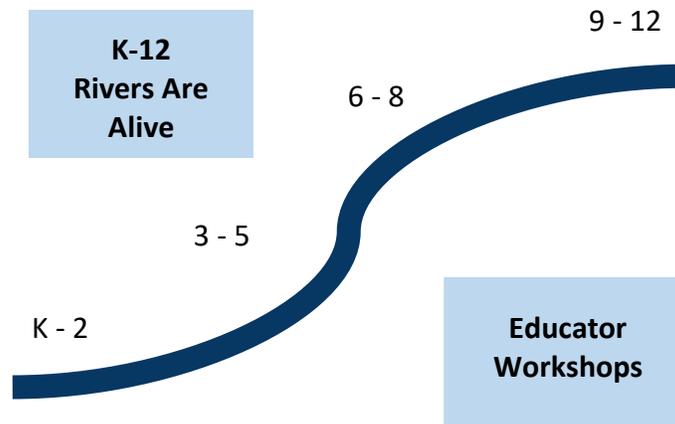
St. Croix  River  
ASSOCIATION

# RIVERS ARE ALIVE

**K-12 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**



Rivers Are Alive is a K-12 environmental education program offered in partnership by the Wild Rivers Conservancy and the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway throughout the St Croix watershed in every season. Rivers Are Alive offers engaging, standards aligned, science activities. Our whole school model connects students to this National Park and its watershed in a learning progression. We believe in the benefits of reconnecting with students throughout their school career to provide a holistic approach to environmental education so that rivers are always alive and present in their learning. We also believe in empowering educators to be river and watershed experts through valuable teacher in-service workshops.



*To learn more...*

Contact Nicole Biagi, SCRA Outdoor Educator  
at 715-483-3300 or [nbiagi@wildriversconservancy.org](mailto:nbiagi@wildriversconservancy.org)

To learn more and request a Rivers Are Alive program online:  
<https://wildriversconservancy.org/learn-explore/rivers-are-alive/>

## RIVERS ARE ALIVE (GRADES K-2)

Learners explore what a river is by investigating underwater life, the life above the river and at its edges.

### BIG IDEAS

- Rivers are more than a moving, stream of water
- Rivers are a home (habitat) to many plants and animals
- Rivers are a highway for fish and migrating birds
- The forests along the river are home to many plants and animals
- Rivers Are Alive in every season

### IN THE CLASSROOM OR SCHOOL YARD

- Let's Go Snowshoeing (January - March)
- Meet a Mussel
- River Connections in the Classroom

### ON THE RIVER

- Let's Go Snowshoeing (January - March)
- Observation Olympics
- Visitor Center Scavenger Hunt & Film (At the Namekagon and St. Croix River Visitor Centers only)
- What is a River?

### *Recommended Teacher Guided Pre Activities*

- *Mapping my Watershed*

### *Recommended Teacher Guided Post Activities*

- *Where the Wild Things Art*
- *The Written River*

## RIVERS CONNECT US (GRADES 3 – 5)

Learners discover their personal connections to the river ecosystem while experiencing the dynamic life that lives there.

### BIG IDEAS

- Rivers are full of diverse aquatic (water) and terrestrial (land) life
- Animals and plants are adapted to live in their river home
- The living and nonliving parts of a river ecosystem are connected
- Humans are connected by rivers
- Humans have an impact on and can protect rivers

### IN THE CLASSROOM OR SCHOOL YARD

- The Great Mussel Mystery
- Let's Go Snowshoeing (January - March)
- Out of Place? Intro to Aquatic Invasive Species
- River Connections in the Classroom
- What is a Watershed?

### ON THE RIVER

- Forests of the Past (social studies connections)
- Let's Go Mucking
- Let's Go Snowshoeing (January - March)
- Visitor Center Scavenger Hunt (At the Namekagon and St. Croix River Visitor Centers)
- What is a River?

#### *Recommended Teacher Guided Pre Activities*

- *Macroinverte-What?*
- *Mapping My Watershed*

#### *Recommended Teacher Guided Post Activity*

- *Macroinverte-Wow!*
- *River Research – The River Wild*
- *The Written River*

## WE NEED HEALTHY RIVERS (GRADES 6 - 8)

Learners explore the interconnectedness of the river ecosystem and the role humans play in maintaining its health.

### BIG IDEAS

- Rivers are full of diverse aquatic and terrestrial life
- Humans have an impact on and can protect water quality
- Invasive species, introduced by humans, can often disrupt ecosystem balance
- Biologists study aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems to learn about animal behavior, life styles and population health (even in the winter)

### IN THE CLASSROOM OR SCHOOL YARD

- Into the Weeds (Invasive Species Exploration)
- Mussel Power
- River Connections in the Classroom
- Snowshoe Sleuths (January - March)
- A Watershed in Jeopardy: AIS Version

### ON THE RIVER

- Forests of the Past
- Layers of the Forest
- Let's Go Mucking
- Let's Go Paddling (Custom program)
- Snowshoe Sleuths (January - March)
- River Quality

#### *Recommended Teacher Guided Pre Activity*

- *Macroinverte-What?*
- *Mapping My National Park*
- *A Training for Tracking*

#### *Recommended Teacher Guided Post Activity*

- *Macroinverte-Wow!*
- *River Research – The River Scenic*
- *The Written River*

## WE ARE RIVER RESPONSIBLE (GRADES 9 - 12)

Students are engaged in citizen science, career path exploration, and river research

### BIG IDEAS

- We all have an impact on and can protect water quality
- Invasive species and pollutants disrupt ecosystem balance
- Scientists are always actively studying the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
- There are important career and volunteer opportunities in conservation
- There are threats to the river, but we can be part of the solution

### IN THE CLASSROOM OR SCHOOL YARD

- Conservation Careers (1/2 hour Conservation Careers presentation)
- Into the Weeds (Invasive Species Exploration)
- Mussel Power
- Snowshoe Sleuths (January - March)
- The Watershed Game
- A Watershed in Jeopardy: AIS Version

### ON THE RIVER

- Layers of the Forest
- Let's Go Mucking
- Let's Go Paddling (Custom program)
- Snowshoe Sleuths (January - March)
- River Quality

#### *Recommended Teacher Guided Pre Activity*

- *Macroinverte-What?*
- *Mapping My National Park*
- *A Training for Tracking*

#### *Recommended Teacher Guided Post Activity*

- *Macroinverte-Wow!*
- *River Research – Wild and Scenic Forever*
- *The Written River*

# At the River

FIELD TRIPS TO THE ST. CROIX NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAY



Trego, WI

## Namekagon River Visitor Center

For northern watershed schools, a visit to the Namekagon River National Park Visitor Center makes for a fun and educational field trip! Students will explore the Visitor Center, watch a fantastic film and discover the underwater life in the Namekagon River.

St. Croix Falls, WI

## St. Croix River Visitor Center

For central and southern watershed schools, a visit to the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Visitor Center makes for a fun and educational field trip! Students will explore the Visitor Center, watch a fantastic film and discover the wild and scenic St. Croix River.

Where You Are in the Watershed

## Rivers Are Alive in Your Community

Rivers Are Alive will travel! We can meet your class at a tributary or river landing near you or even at a local park or preserve. Students will experience how their community is connected to our watershed and to this National Park

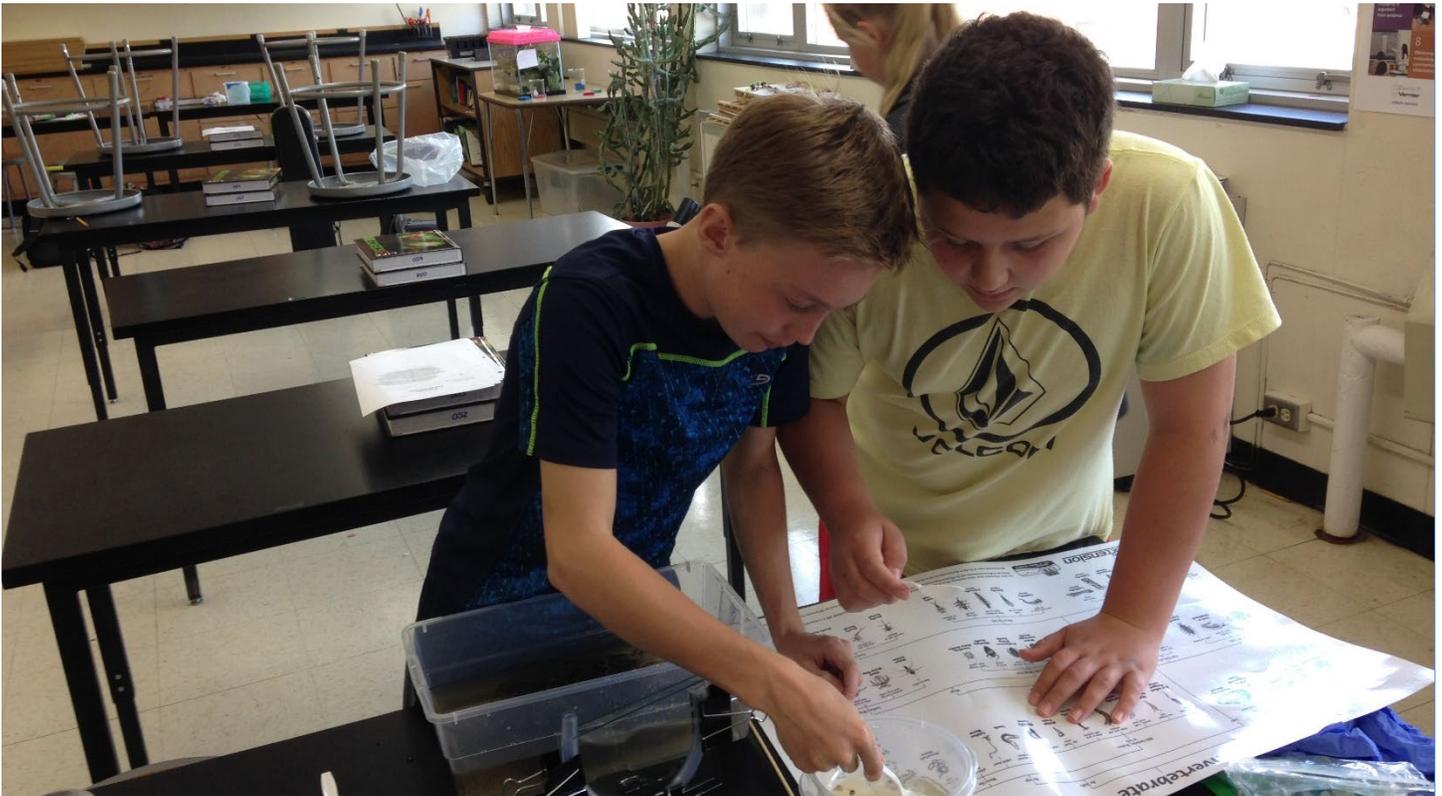


## MN AND WI STATE PARKS

We work closely with MN and WI state park in the St. Croix River watershed to coordinate Rivers Are Alive field trips to all state parks in the St. Croix River watershed. Hiking and hands-on learning are an integral part of these state park adventures!

# In the Classroom

RIVER ARE ALIVE IN THE CLASSROOM



## Science Classroom Connections

We will bring the river to life for your students in the classroom. Students will explore the interconnectedness of their local river ecosystem discovering the animals that make their home here, and how these animals are adapted to survive and thrive here.

## Science Watershed Ed

Students will define what a watershed is, build their own watershed model, recognize how humans impact the watershed by testing a watershed model, and ultimately learn how they can care for the water in their community which will protect this National Park.

## Science Invasive Species

Invasive species may forever change the way we live our lives. Students will identify how invasive species affect our economies and ecosystems, and the role we all can play to prevent their further spread through ID, monitoring and taking action.

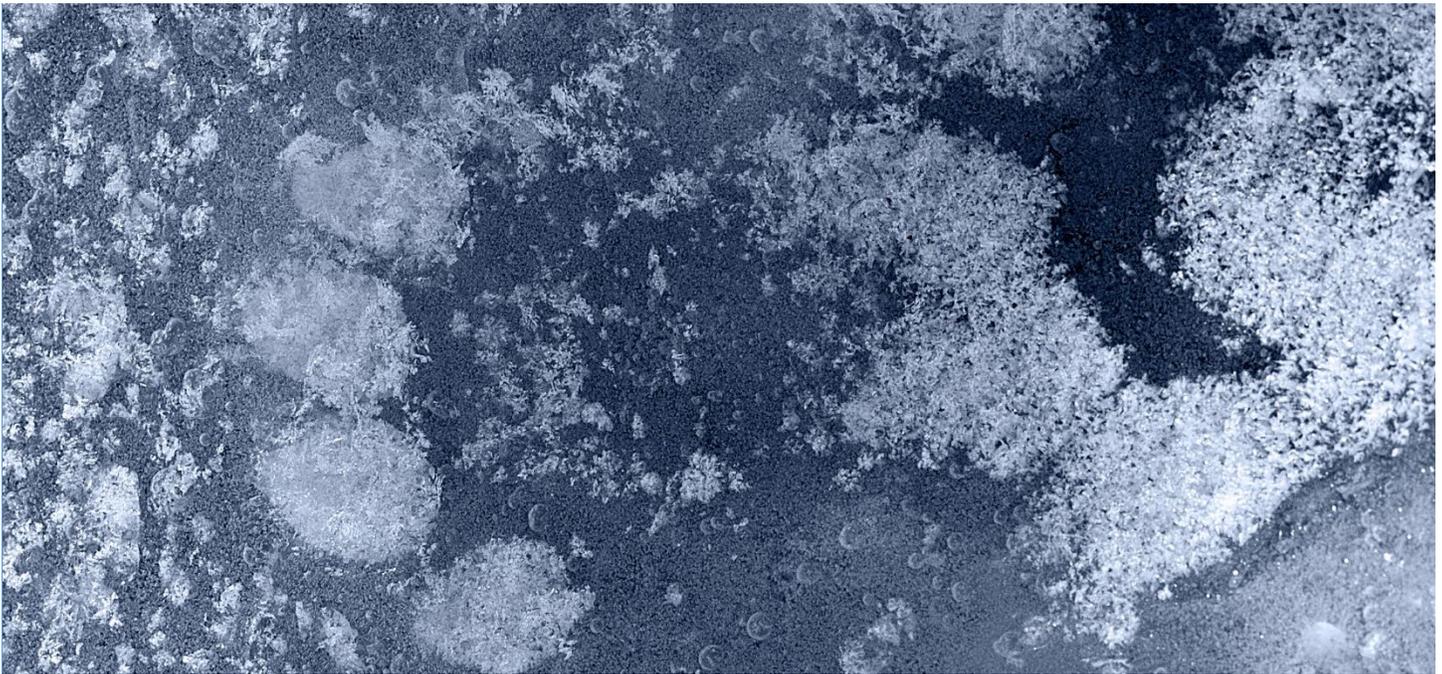


## Fourth Grade National Park Pass **EVERY KID OUTDOORS**

Fourth grade teachers, your students are eligible to receive an Every Kid Outdoors Pass which gets them into National Park and other Federal sites for free! Learn more: <https://everykidoutdoors.gov>

# Winter in the Watershed

## SNOWSHOE ADVENTURES



### National Park Winter Field Trip

The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is home to many great winter trails. We will meet your class at one of these trails to snowshoe as part of our *Let's Go Snowshoeing* or *Snowshoe Sleuths* class.

### Your School Snowshoe Fun at School

We have a variety of snowshoes that will fit students in grades K-12. Choose from our basic *Let's Go Snowshoeing* class for grades K - 5 or our *Snowshoe Sleuths* class for grades 6 - 12.

### State Park Winter Field Trip

We will meet your class at your favorite Minnesota or Wisconsin State Park in the St. Croix River watershed. There are many great trails to explore and signs of wildlife to discover during winter in the watershed.



## RIVERS ARE ALIVE...EVEN IN WINTER

The *Let's Go Snowshoeing* class for grades K – 5 introduces students to snowshoeing by considering all of the animals who travel on snowy ground with their furry, snowshoe-like feet.

The *Snowshoe Sleuths* class for grades 6 - 12 fosters discovery and exploration as students actively search for winter wildlife signs and tracks.

# Step 1 – Request Program

Email us for more info:

[nbiagi@wildriversconservancy.org](mailto:nbiagi@wildriversconservancy.org)

# Step 2 – Complete online form

1. Complete online request form:  
<https://wildriversconservancy.org/learn-explore/rivers-are-alive/raa-program-info-request/>
2. Press submit.
3. We will contact you to coordinate your program.



## Program Costs

Donations of \$2 (half-day or classroom) - \$4 (full-day) per student are encouraged to ensure this program continues for long into the future.

### All programs are free except for:

- Transportation costs – schools cover\*

\*Scholarships available; please ask us!

### Rivers Are Alive Education Partners:



*"We can't thank you enough for the learning you facilitated with our students. We were all so impressed and the students were so engaged. We will definitely be contacting you next fall for a similar experience. THANK YOU!" – River Crest Elementary Teacher*



K-12 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND NATIONAL PARK FIELD TRIP PROGRAM

<https://wildriversconservancy.org/learn-explore/rivers-are-alive/>



# Class Menu

*All classes are aligned with MN & WI  
Academic Content Standards*

## Classroom Connections

### Grades K – 2

#### **LET'S GO SNOWSHOEING (JAN – MARCH)**

##### **Essential Understanding**

Snowshoes make our feet bigger so we can walk more easily through snow without sinking in. Animals like the snowshoe hare have large, wide feet that keep them near the top of the snow. Let's experience what it's like to be snowshoe hare. Let's Go Snowshoeing!

#### **MEET A MUSSEL**

##### **Essential Understanding**

You mean muscle, right? Nope! Freshwater mussels live in lakes and rivers in Minnesota and Wisconsin. What are they? Let's meet a mussel and learn about these mysterious and marvelous creatures together!

#### **RIVER CONNECTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM**

##### **Essential Understanding**

Rivers Are Alive! They are home to many amazing animals and plants. We will introduce students to the animals that are part of the river community in their community and offer the opportunity for observation of animal parts, activity station collaboration and discovery.

## THE GREAT MUSSEL MYSTERY

### Essential Understanding

We have muscles (strong, of course) and rivers have mussels; freshwater mussels! These bi-valves remind us of oysters and clams, and North America has more than 300 species of freshwater mussels; more than anywhere else in the world. But what are these two-shelled organisms? Are they animals? Are they alive? Do they even do anything? Mussels are mysterious and students will gather evidence (clues) to learn more about these river and lake bottom dwellers.

## LET'S GO SNOWSHOEING (JAN – MARCH)

### Essential Understanding

Snowshoes make our feet bigger so we can walk more easily through snow without sinking in. Animals like the snowshoe hare have large, wide feet that keep them near the top of the snow. Let's experience what it's like to be snowshoe hare. Let's Go Snowshoeing!

## OUT OF PLACE?

### Essential Understanding

Have you ever been the new kid and felt a little out of place? Sometimes in nature, animals and plants are introduced to an ecosystem where they are considered out of place, and they have to figure out a way to thrive and survive. And sometimes, those out of place animals and plants figure out a survival strategy that works too well and they make it hard for the animals and plants that have always lived in that ecosystem to survive. Students will participate in an interactive game to explore this idea.

## RIVERS CONNECTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

### Essential Understanding

We can learn a lot by observing the animals that live near us, even if we are only observing animal objects. In this class, we will bring the river to your classroom. Students will step into the shoes of scientists and participate in observation, collaboration, and team teaching. Finally, they will discover the interconnectedness of a river ecosystem, in which humans are part of, by creating an ecosystem model.

## WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

### Essential Understanding

The ponds, streams, creeks, rivers and lakes in our communities are full of life, and they are all connected to each other. Students will be introduced to watersheds by constructing their own watershed and experimenting with a watershed model. They will understand that we all live in a watershed and are connected by them, and how we care for the water in our communities can positively or negatively impact our downstream neighbors and the quality of water within a watershed.

## **INTO THE WEEDS – A WATERSHED IN JEOPARDY**

### **Essential Understanding**

Invasive species may forever change the way we live our lives. From gardeners to hikers, farmers to landowners, humans are impacted by these fast-spreading species. Students will identify how terrestrial invasive species affect our economies and ecosystems, and the role we all can play to prevent their further spread through an engaging and interactive game of jeopardy.

## **MUSSEL POWER**

### **Essential Understanding**

Mussels are among the most threatened and endangered species in North America, including species we find in rivers in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Is there hope for these simple, but critical river organisms? Analyze charts, graphs and scientific research to determine the health of populations in the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and predict the future for these important filter feeders.

## **RIVERS CONNECTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM**

### **Essential Understanding**

We can learn a lot about how animals are adapted to survive in their habitat by observing their structures and behaviors, even if we are only observing animal objects. In this class, we will bring the river to your classroom. Students will step into the shoes of scientists and participate in observation, collaboration, and team teaching. Finally, they will discover the interconnectedness of an animal's structures and behaviors and the greater river ecosystem by creating an ecosystem model.

## **SNOWSHOE SLEUTHS (Jan - March)**

### **Essential Understanding**

Winter is a cold and quiet time of the year, but animal life is active all winter long. Many animals migrate or hibernate during the winter months but many animal species are toughing out the cold weather and we can tell who is still around by the clues and signs of life they leave in the snow. Students will put on snowshoes and discover how rivers are alive, even in the winter by searching for animal signs and learning animal tracking basics.

## **A WATERSHED IN JEOPARDY: AIS VERSION**

### **Essential Understanding**

AIS – Some aquatic invasive species are causing big problems in many of our lakes and rivers in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Is there anything we can do? Students will work in teams to learn more about AIS, how to identify AIS and how to prevent their spread through a fun game of jeopardy.

## CONSERVATION CAREERS

### Essential Understanding

Students will explore conservation career paths by listening to the words of past conservation leaders who worked to protect the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and other important public lands, as well as the voice of new leadership who are working to ensure a more diverse and inclusive outdoors.

## INTO THE WEEDS – A WATERSHED IN JEOPARDY

### Essential Understanding

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## THE WATERSHED GAME

### Essential Understanding

The Watershed Game is an interactive, educational tool created by the University of MN Extension and Minnesota Sea Grant that helps individuals understand the connection between land use and water quality. Participants learn how a variety of land uses impact water and natural resources, increase their knowledge of best management practices (BMPs), and learn how their choices can prevent adverse impacts. Participants apply the tools of plans, practices, and policies that help them achieve clean water goals for protection and restoration while providing for community growth

## A WATERSHED IN JEOPARDY: AIS VERSION

### Essential Understanding

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# Field Trip Fun

## Grades K – 2

### LET'S GO SNOWSHOEING (JAN – MARCH)

#### Essential Understanding

Snowshoes make our feet bigger so we can walk more easily through snow without sinking in. Animals like the snowshoe hare have large, wide feet that keep them near the top of the snow. Let's experience what it's like to be snowshoe hare. Let's Go Snowshoeing!

### OBSERVATION OLYMPICS

#### Essential Understanding

Our eyes are not the only tool we can use to make observations of the natural world. We can use all five of our senses to experience and explore nature...and it can be fun! This fast paced, hands-on class makes observation fun. When we are actively observing like scientists, one could argue that observation could even be an Olympic sport!

### VISITOR CENTER SCAVENGER HUNT

#### Essential Understanding

We do not have to travel too far to visit a National Park or Monument. An interactive scavenger hunt during your field trip to the Namekagon or St. Croix Visitor Center will inspire your students to learn more about this incredible Riverway. Students will also view a short film that tells the story of the St. Croix and how it became designated as a Wild and Scenic River through the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

### WHAT IS A RIVER?

#### Essential Understanding

Learners will consider that how a river is more than just a flowing, moving stream of water. It is a home and highway for many living organisms.

## Grades 3 – 5

### THE FLOODED FOREST OR BUILD A FOREST

#### Essential Understanding

We can use our observation skills to study a forest and build an ecosystem model of the interactions within it.

### FORESTS OF THE PAST

#### Essential Understanding

Native Americans, fur trappers, loggers, recreationalists, and government agencies, such as the United States Forest Service and the National Park Service, have used and shaped the forest throughout history. What we decide to do with the forest will determine its future.

### LET'S GO MUCKING

#### Essential Understanding

Sometimes it's the smallest creatures in an ecosystem that tell us the most about its health. It doesn't get any more hands-on than mucking in the river for macroinvertebrates. In this class, students become biologists and use a variety of tools and materials to collect, observe and identify the tiny creatures that are big indicators of how healthy a body of water is.

## **LET'S GO SNOWSHOEING (JAN – MARCH)**

### **Essential Understanding**

Snowshoes make our feet bigger so we can walk more easily through snow without sinking in. Animals like the snowshoe hare have large, wide feet that keep them near the top of the snow. Let's experience what it's like to be snowshoe hare. Let's Go Snowshoeing!

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## **WHAT IS A RIVER?**

### **Essential Understanding**

Grades 3-5 will investigate what causes a river to bend, move and flow and where they start and end. Students will learn about how the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers were formed.

## **Grades 6 - 8**

## **FORESTS OF THE PAST**

### **Essential Understanding**

Native Americans, fur trappers, loggers, recreationalists, and government agencies, such as the United States Forest Service and the National Park Service, have used and shaped the forest throughout history. What we decide to do with the forest will determine its future.

## **LAYERS OF THE FOREST**

### **Essential Understanding**

Different forests have different "looks" and "feels;" a forest in northern Minnesota or Wisconsin might "look" and "feel" different than a forest in central or southern Minnesota or Wisconsin. Part of the look and feel of a forest can be described by its layers. We can be scientists today and describe a forest the plants and animals that live in its layers.

## **LET'S GO MUCKING**

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## **LET'S GO PADDLING (MAY – SEPT)**

### **Essential Understanding**

There is nothing quite like getting students on the river! It is much easier to learn about and study the river ecosystem when you are paddling in a quiet, backwater channel. We will work with you to customize a paddling program for your students (there are size limitations) with a focus on river systems, floodplains, and river health.

## **SNOWSHOE SLEUTHS (Jan - March)**

### **Essential Understanding**

Winter is a cold and quiet time of the year, but animal life is active all winter long. Many animals migrate or hibernate during the winter months but many animal species are toughing out the cold weather and we can tell who is still around by the clues and signs of life they leave in the snow. Students will put on snowshoes and discover how rivers are alive, even in the winter by searching for animal signs and learning animal tracking basics.

## **RIVER QUALITY**

### **Essential Understanding**

Sometimes you can tell how healthy water is just by looking at it, but sometimes you can't. In this class, students become hydrologists and use a variety of tools and equipment to test the quality of water.

## **Grades 9 - 12**

## **LAYERS OF THE FOREST**

### **Essential Understanding**

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# DIY Pre and Post Activities

## **PRE ACTIVITY: MACROINVERTE-WHAT? (GRADES 3 – 12)**

### **Essential Understanding**

Macroinvertebrate is a mouthful and what even is a macroinvertebrate? This activity will prepare your students for their Let's Go Mucking field trip with Rivers Are Alive.

## **PRE ACTIVITY: MAPPING MY WATERSHED (ALL GRADE LEVELS)**

### **Essential Understanding**

Provide your students with a sense of place before their Rivers Are Alive experience. We will send you a grade level appropriate mapping activity so they are familiar with the St. Croix River and its watershed.

## **PRE ACTIVITY: A TRAINING FOR TRACKING (GRADES 6 – 12)**

### **Essential Understanding**

The winter landscape is a journal upon which animals write their stories. Students will view an interactive PowerPoint that quizzes them on their animal track expertise and trains them on track patterns prior to their Snowshoe Sleuths adventure.

## **POST ACTIVITY: MACROINVERTE-WOW! (GRADES 3 – 12)**

### **Essential Understanding**

This activity will close out your students' Let's Go Mucking experience in a powerful way. Students will discover how macroinvertebrates are indicators of water quality by using the Pollution Tolerance Index.

## **POST ACTIVITY: RESEARCH PROJECT (GRADES 3 – 12)**

### **Essential Understanding**

*Grades 3 – 5: The River Wild* – Research the wildlife that live in the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and its "wild" designation as a wild and scenic river

*Grades 6 – 8: The River Scenic* – Research the "scenic" characteristics of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverways's designation as a wild and scenic river

*Grades 9 – 12: Wild and Scenic Forever* - Research environmental threats to the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and its watershed and work in teams to engineer possible solutions.

## **POST ACTIVITY: WHERE THE WILD THINGS ART (Grades K – 3)**

### **Essential Understanding**

Just like we have a home that provides shelter, space, food and water, there are many creatures who make their home in a stream or river and this habitat provides everything they need to survive. Students will recreate one river or woodland animal's habitat through art.

## **POST ACTIVITY: THE WRITTEN RIVER (GRADES K – 12)**

### **Essential Understanding**

From children's literature (K – 3) to poetry (4 – 6) to conservationist writing to protect rivers (7 – 12), the words written about rivers live on in articles, books, and in the hearts and minds of people who love rivers. Give your students the opportunity to reflect upon their Rivers Are Alive experience through writing a simple St. Croix Haiku, exploring river literature and other forms of writing.